

Policy to Support Students with Disabilities, Long Term Health Conditions, Mental Health Concerns and Learning Difficulties

Note on language

In UK equality law the word “disability” is used to represent a wide range of conditions which include physical disabilities, long term health conditions, mental health concerns and learning difficulties. The legal definition within the Equality Act 2010 is:

a physical or mental impairment which has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Throughout this policy, “disability” will be used as an umbrella term to cover the wide range of conditions that are given protection. However, the University does recognise that this is not necessarily a term that all our students will use personally or feel comfortable with.

For more information about this policy, please follow this link - <https://students.brunel.ac.uk/support/disability-dyslexia-support> or email: wellbeing@brunel.ac.uk.

Introduction

Brunel University London is committed to providing a culture where all students may study, work, and live without encountering disadvantage or discrimination because of their disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010. For further information on the protection of people with disabilities under the legislation, see Appendix A. In addition the mental health and wellbeing of all our students is considered a top priority and since 2018 the University has had a Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Students which places good mental health and wellbeing for all at the heart of our ethos.

The University does not tolerate bullying or harassment and expects the whole community to behave in an inclusive way and treat others with respect and dignity. Incidents of bullying and harassment related to someone’s disability are likely to be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and dealt with under Senate Regulation 6: for more information see - www.brunel.ac.uk/about/administration/governance-and-university-committees/senate-regulations and the Student Misconduct Procedure see -<https://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/documents/pdf/Student-Disciplinary-Procedure>

Scope

The aim of this policy is to ensure that:

- a prospective student, current student, or a graduate of the University will not be treated less favourably than any other, on the grounds of their disability; and
- appropriate support is available throughout their student journey, from application stage, through study, graduation and progression into the workplace and or further education.

In addition the policy aims to provide advice and support to University employees on how best to support students who have a disability to gain the best degree outcome and student experience. Such support may relate to the student's study, both on and off campus (including learning, assessment, examinations, work placements, trips and internships), research, health and safety, accommodation, finance, and social activities both on and off campus where activities are linked to the university community.

Brunel Commitment

Brunel University London commits to:

- Ensuring that the University will take all reasonable steps to meet its statutory obligations to treat students with disabilities fairly and equally and to eliminate and prevent any discrimination.
- Providing a fully inclusive culture and environment free from physical, systemic and attitudinal barriers, which could prevent students with disabilities from being treated fairly and / or reaching their full potential.
- Ensuring that no student will be denied access or progression to admission, registration, teaching and learning, or research on the grounds of their disability.
- Ensuring that no student with a disability will be treated unfairly in relation to the awarding of scholarships, grants and other awards under the University's control or the provision of student support.
- Ensuring that University systems, processes and procedures do not disadvantage a student with a disability such as health and safety, complaints, or disciplinary procedures.
- Providing a fully accessible campus including learning environments, accommodation, IT platforms, and social spaces.
- Ensuring that the current curriculum, readings lists and teaching content does not use disablist content or stereotypical assumptions about disability.
- Providing students with a disability with positive and appropriate support to meet their needs and, as far as possible, to make any required reasonable adjustments in a timely fashion.

- Disseminating this policy throughout the University community.
- Providing information, training and advice to staff and students about different types of disability and how to provide appropriate support to students with a disability.
- Ensuring that the Student Equality & Diversity Manager conducts an annual review of the disability data disclosed by students of the University to identify any trends which need to be addressed and / or investigated further.

Expectations of Students with a Disability

It is expected that a student of the University with a disability shall commit to:

- Finding out what support, advice and guidance is available at the University to support them with any needs they have arising from their disability.
- Disclosing their disability as early as possible and providing all necessary evidence and documentation in a timely way to ensure appropriate support can be put in place as soon as possible.
- When a student experiences any difficulties, changes in their condition and / or treatment that they communicate with their tutor and / or Student Support and Welfare early on particularly if there is going to be any impact on their learning such as attendance, assessments or examinations.
- Taking a patient and pragmatic approach particularly when any support plan is being developed and any interventions put in place.

Disclosure and confidentiality

No student is under an obligation to disclose any disability, long term health condition, mental health concern and / or learning difficulty to the University. However, you are encouraged to advise the University as soon as you enrol or develop a condition, to ensure that the most appropriate support and advice is made available to you. You can do this either via your Tutor, Supervisory Team and / or the Student Support and Welfare Team at the Student Centre who will arrange an appointment with a specialist advisor. The University will handle your information sensitively and will only share where appropriate and absolutely necessary.

Getting support if you have a disability

You are encouraged to seek support as soon as possible, either on arrival at the University or when the disability develops. You should contact either your Tutor / Supervisory Team and / or the Student Support and Welfare Team, in the Student Centre who can be contacted via telephone 01895 267045 or email studentsupport@brunel.ac.uk, They will refer you to the Student Wellbeing Team.

Support Plan

Student Wellbeing will assess your needs and develop a Support Plan with you which is intended to help identify and coordinate support, to ensure that (where possible) your needs are met. You may be required to provide evidence of your disability and how it impacts on you. The Support Plan will be drawn up in writing and will be approved by yourself before being shared with any other relevant staff at the University. Once you have consented to it, a copy will be kept by your college and by the Student Wellbeing Team. The Support Plan should be monitored and reviewed regularly by Student Wellbeing particularly if there are any significant changes in your disability which might impact your learning.

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

UK students may be eligible for funded support through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). This pays for additional support recommended in a Needs Assessment, e.g. specialist equipment, travel costs, 1 to 1 study skills or mentoring. Students are advised to make an appointment at the Student Centre with the Student Support and Welfare Team to see a specialist advisor (see contact details above) for more information about DSA funding and how to apply.

Adjustments

If you need additional support with your learning either near to assessment deadlines or during the examination period, you are encouraged to speak to your Tutor, Supervisory Team or make an appointment at the Student Centre to see an advisor from Student Wellbeing who can discuss arrangements or adjustments. For more information see - www.brunel.ac.uk/about/administration/examinations All adjustments should be sought at least 3 weeks in advance of the examination period otherwise the adjustment cannot be guaranteed.

You may also need to seek medical advice from your doctor. If your doctor advises against attempting to meet the assessment deadline or sitting an examination, an alternative timing and method of assessment will be explored, where possible, as long as all learning outcomes of the module are still met. Other options such as extensions to submission deadlines, deferrals of examinations, or abeyance may also be explored. Any additional appropriate arrangements can be added to the Student Support Plan.

Extenuating Circumstances

If you experience an unexpected or a sudden deterioration related to your disability during an examination, or when undertaking assessed work, you may submit a claim for extenuating circumstances. This will be considered under the University's Extenuating Circumstances Policy. For more information see –

<https://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/quality-assurance/documents/pdf/Extenuating-Circumstances-Guidance-for-Students>.

Abeyance

In very rare situations you may feel that you need to take some time off away from your studies at the University. This is called abeyance. The Student Centre can provide information about taking a period of disability related abeyance and the process involved. For more information see -

www.intra.brunel.ac.uk/s/studentcentre/study/Pages/Abeyance.aspx Your Tutor / Department can provide academic advice about the implications of taking extended leave and must formally approve the request. Permission must be sought from the University's Education Committee in the event of periods of abeyance exceeding one calendar year.

Professional programmes / Work Placements / Study Abroad

During a placement, students will be required to follow the employer's regulations and policies in addition to the University's requirements. If you are taking part in a work placement and require reasonable adjustments, you are encouraged to liaise with the University at the earliest opportunity.

Professional programmes may have specific requirements such as minimum attendance or a work placement; therefore, students enrolled on such programmes are advised to consult with their department and placement provider at the earliest opportunity.

If you are currently studying abroad, you should liaise with your Department or the Student Wellbeing Team who will put a Support Plan in place.

Getting emotional support

Living with a disability can sometimes be difficult, lonely and / or distressing. If you find that your disability is affecting your mental health or wellbeing you are encouraged to seek support from our Student Wellbeing Team and book an appointment with an advisor at the Student Centre via the Student Support and Welfare Team – phone 01895 267045 or email studentsupport@brunel.ac.uk,

You can also get advice and support from a number of external agencies – see details in Appendix B.

Timescales

Once you have disclosed a disability, the Student Wellbeing Team will be in touch within 3 days and an appointment will be made for you with a specialist adviser

within 15 working days. Once an appointment with an advisor has taken place, support will be implemented within two weeks.

Supporting a student who has a disability

The University recognises that disclosing a disability may be hard and stressful for a student.

Should a student disclose a disability to a member of staff at the University, they should be reassured that the University does not discriminate against students who have disabilities and that there is a wide range of support available to enable them to continue with their studies. The student should be encouraged to seek support from their Department or the Student Support & Welfare Team who will make an appointment with an advisor, refer you to a relevant service and direct you to this policy which also details how to access support, advice and guidance.

Where a staff member meets face-to-face with a student or speaks to them by telephone, the staff member should make a written record detailing what was discussed, any advice given and any follow up required. A copy of the written record should be emailed to the student with a copy of the e-mail saved in a secure location. Where appropriate, the staff member may consider it necessary to inform other relevant staff members that the student has disclosed a disability. Where possible, this should only be done with the student's consent.

Further information is provided in the flowchart in appendix C.

Protection from bullying and harassment

The University takes a zero-tolerance approach to any harassment or bullying. Bullying and harassment on the basis of disability could be regarded as grounds for a complaint under the Bullying and Harassment Policy. Students with disabilities are encouraged to report any issues via the Report and Support portal - www.reportandsupport.brunel.ac.uk/

Training

General awareness and understanding of disability is mandatory for all University employees. All new starters are required to attend an 'Equally Different' workshop and there is also an online module for existing employees. If an employee is teaching or working with a student who has a disability with which they are less familiar, it is their responsibility to become more informed. They can do this by seeking advice from advisors in the Student Wellbeing team (wellbeing@brunel.ac.uk) or checking online information (see specialist agencies in Appendix B). In addition, the University's Staff Development team may from time to time provide a workshop on a particular disability.

Data recording

All disabilities which are disclosed should be recorded along with any support put in place. Any disability that is disclosed to a department or a college should be provided to Student Wellbeing who have a Disability and Dyslexia Team and a Mental Health and Counselling Team. This data will be reviewed by Student Services annually and any trends monitored and addressed.

Complaints

If you feel that the University has failed to comply with this policy, you may raise your concerns using the Students' Complaints Procedure. For more information see - www.brunel.ac.uk/life/supporting-you/student-complaints-conduct-and-appeals Guidance notes are available which provide further information about raising a complaint. The Complaints Procedure cannot be used to make an academic appeal against a decision of a Board of Examiners for which you should instead refer to Senate Regulation 12 and Academic Appeals - . www.brunel.ac.uk/about/administration/governance-and-university-committees/senate-regulations

Appendix A

Equality Legislation

Individuals with disabilities are protected by the Equality Act 2010. The University is required to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Specifically under the Public Sector Duty, higher education institutions are required to ensure that prospective and current students with disabilities are not disadvantaged or discriminated against in their application to or access of higher education. A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. They can be visible or invisible, fluctuating and / or progressive. It covers a wide range of conditions including physical and mobility impairments, learning difficulties, mental health conditions, medical conditions, sensory impairments and autistic spectrum conditions. Chronic illnesses such as HIV, multiple sclerosis, chronic pain and cancer are deemed as disability from the point of diagnoses under legislation.

'Substantial' is defined by the impact of the condition is more than minor or trivial – e.g. it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task.

'Long-term' means it must be likely to last or reoccur over a period of 12 months or more.

The University will endeavour to provide a fully inclusive environment as far as possible. However it also has a duty to make any reasonable adjustments that are necessary and to remove any potential disadvantage that a disabled student faces in their education because of their disability. A reasonable adjustment can include but is not limited to making adjustments to physical features of premises, providing accessible learning and teaching, policies and procedures and auxiliary aids, assisted technology and services.

A reasonable adjustment aims to ensure that everyone is treated in an equitable way.

It involves making a change to the way someone works, or to the way we work with

them, following consultation with them and has the effect of minimising the person's impairment throughout their education so that they are able to reach their full potential.

Whilst the Equality Act does not define what is reasonable, the consideration of whether an adjustment is 'reasonable' is judged against the following:

- Whether the adjustment agreed with the student will help in overcoming the difficulty;
- The extent to which it is practical for the University to make the adjustment(s);
- The cost and availability of resources, including external assistance and finance;
- The extent to which making the adjustment(s) would disrupt the University activities;
- The size of the institution and its resources.

Appendix B

External support agencies who provide help and support

The lists below provides details of key health charities. It is correct at the time of writing (September 2019). Check websites for up-to-date contact information. Please note that Brunel University London does not endorse or take responsibility for the information provided by external organisations. Unfortunately the list is not exhaustive for all agencies that provide support so we recommend that if your disability is not included, please ask your health care practitioner for further information and / or for details of support groups available.

External Services

Equality Challenge Unit provides advice and support for students and staff on equality and diversity in higher education — www.ecu.ac.uk/

Equality and Human Rights Commission is the statutory body responsible for protecting, enforcing and promoting equality across the nine protected characteristics — age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, and sexual orientation — www.equalityhumanrights.com

Specialist health / disability agencies

Action on Hearing Loss supports people across the UK to manage their deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss. They provide information and community-based care and support services, develop technology and treatments, and campaign for equality. Email information@hearingloss.org.uk for advice and guidance.

British Heart Foundation offers advice to those with heart conditions via their website, information booklets or heart helpline. It also provide information to help people reduce their own heart health risk, funds cardiovascular research and life-saving skills and equipment, campaigns for minimising the risk of developing heart and circulatory disease. For more information see - www.bhf.org.uk

Diabetes UK provides support for everyone affected by diabetes, seeks to prevent Type 2 diabetes, campaigns and funds research that will one day lead to a cure. For more information see - www.diabetes.org.uk

Epilepsy Action offers information, advice and support for people with epilepsy. It provides freephone and email helplines and a wide range of information booklets. It

has around 100 local support groups across England, Wales and Northern Ireland and a network of volunteers working in the community. For more information see - www.epilepsy.org.uk/

Leonard Cheshire Disability is a major health and welfare charity which encourage and move disabled individuals toward independent living, with the freedom to live life their way. They supports disabled people through local care services including supported living, domiciliary support, respite care, and employment and skills support. It also campaigns on issues affecting disabled people. For more information see - www.leonardcheshire.org

Macmillan Cancer Support provides specialist health care, information and financial support to people affected by cancer. It also looks at the social, emotional and practical impact cancer can have, and campaigns for better cancer care. For more information call 0808 808 00 00.

Mencap works to provide help and support to people with a learning disability and their families and carers. They fight for equal rights, campaign for greater opportunities and challenge attitudes and prejudice. For more information see - www.mencap.org.uk/

Mind offers information and advice to people with mental health problems and lobbies government and local authorities on their behalf. It also works to raise public awareness and understanding of issues relating to mental health. For more information see - www.mind.org.uk/

The National Autistic Society provides advice and support for people with autism aiming to improve the lives of autistic people. They provide a Helpline, a range of products for professionals working with autistics and a campaigning function. For more information, contact - www.autism.org.uk/

RNIB offers help and support for blind and partially sighted people including practical and emotional support, campaigning for change, reading services and the products available in their online shop. For support and advice contact - www.rnib.org.uk

Scope provides direct services for people with disabilities and campaigns to challenge and change negative attitudes about disability. For more information see - www.scope.org.uk/

Turning Point is a health and social care organisation that provides support and advice across a range of issues including mental health, learning disability and primary care. For further detail see - www.turning-point.co.uk/

Appendix C - Flowchart to support students with disabilities

This summarises the steps of the procedure and information provided in this policy.

